

Softwood Lumber Products Export Charge Act

An Hon. Member: Ask a question.

Mr. Waddell: I am making a comment. The Hon. Member for Cape Breton—The Sydneys (Mr. MacLellan) has flagged this issue. The fact is that the Americans are already moving from softwood lumber on to energy. The Government has led Canada into that and it will keep going that way.

Mr. McDermid: Check with the EEC and Japan and see what is happening there.

Mr. Friesen: I have listened to the Hon. Member's speech. At one point he made reference to the fact that there will undoubtedly be a change in the value of the Canadian dollar, which could affect the flow of products across to the United States. It is a legitimate concern. In light of the point that he raised, I would ask the Hon. Member in all seriousness if he has read the entire Memorandum of Understanding?

Mr. MacLellan: I have not read the whole Memorandum of Understanding, but I have read a good part of it and excerpts. If there is a guard against that type of thing, I would appreciate the Hon. Member telling me.

Mr. Friesen: I would like to point out that the Hon. Member made a very dramatic speech. I must say I enjoyed listening to it, even if it was full of errors. But it was a good speech from his point of view. It was flawed because he has not read the Memorandum. The Memorandum does allow for a re-examination of the entire agreement when there is a dramatic change in product flow across the border. If the Hon. Member examines the effect of the Canadian dollar on the cost of the product, he will quickly agree that when the cost of Canadian product increases and becomes uncompetitive there will be a dramatic drop. If the Canadian dollar will affect the flow, the Memorandum and the whole agreement will be re-examined.

Mr. MacLellan: If my speech is flawed, so far none of the flaws have been brought out by the Hon. Member. When it refers to product flow across the border, to say that relates to the exchange and the currencies between Canada and the United States is really stretching the point. There is absolutely no relation to the product flow and the fact of the difference in the currency rate.

I am glad that the Hon. Member is not a lawyer. If he drew up an agreement containing that terminology with the intent of bringing into the wording the exchange rate between Canada and the United States, we would be in more trouble than we are right now with this Government.

Mr. Langdon: I have a relatively minor point to raise and register with the Member whose speech I have enjoyed. I wish to register the reports and briefs which we have received this week from the Canadian Paper Workers Union emphasizing their very strong opposition to this lumber agreement.

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As the Hon. Member will know, they represent softwood lumber workers in the eastern half of Canada. Would the Hon. Member be able to explain the difference between perspectives which exist among workers in western Canada, represented through the IWA, and workers in the central and eastern parts of Canada, represented through the Canadian Paperworkers Union? Would he be able to comment on that?

Mr. MacLellan: Mr. Speaker, I do not think there are any people involved in the lumber industry who are more concerned than the people in Atlantic Canada. At the present time the stumpage fees in Atlantic Canada are considerably higher than they are in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia.

It could mean that the actual cost to Atlantic Canadians will be even more devastating than it is to Canadians in other provinces. This is an area where the economy is less able to bear any kind of strain than any other part of Canada; that is not to say that the other four provinces are very affluent. It certainly does not mean that.

However, the economy of Atlantic Canada, as the Minister of Transport (Mr. Crosbie) knows, is in a very bad state indeed. This is where the worst results and the worst impact will be felt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I will recognize the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary and the Hon. Member for Egmont (Mr. Henderson) on two very short questions.

Mr. McDermid: Mr. Speaker, I gather my hon. friend is a lawyer. He delivered a 20 minute speech in 35 minutes, trying to poke holes in an agreement which he had not even read. I find that to be absolutely irresponsible. I can understand why he got into politics and out of the practice of law.

Mr. MacLellan: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised by the comments of the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary. It just goes to show the straws which the Government and the Conservative Party are clutching. Those were the comments of a man who was putting forward the case for the Government, and the most significant thing he came up with was that I did not read the whole agreement. That is the worst thing he can say about what I said. I am still waiting for the flaws in my speech which Hon. Members opposite say are there. They have had their chance; obviously my speech was flawless, and I thank them for their plaudits.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—The Sydneys (Mr. MacLellan) for presenting an excellent speech, but I have one very quick question for him.

As he will know, only five softwood lumber producers in the Maritimes will be exempt under the agreement. Producers from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick especially complained about being hit not only by the 15 per cent tax but about the